

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 01009 211447Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 211159Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6939
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PEPR PINS EG SY CY
SUBJ: SIBAI MURDER

REF: CAIRO 5535

1. SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTED OF THE SIBAI MURDER AND
SUBSEQUENT LANARCA HIGHJACKING HAS INCLUDED STATEMENT THAT
IRAQI INTELLIGENCE WAS THE SPONSOR.

2. AKHBAR'S CLAIM (PARA 4 REFTTEL) THAT THERE WAS SECRET
AGREEMENT BETWEEN KYPRIANOU, TERRORISTS AND DAMASCUS
APPEARS SPECIOUS. JUDGING BY BEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN
DAMASCUS, WE CONSIDER EGYPTIAN PRESS PLAY HAS DISTORTED
THE SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THIS AFFAIR. AS REPORTED
DAMASCUS 1000 (NOTAL), KYPRIANOU TELEPHONED ASSAD
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SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 1400L, WHEN HIGHJACKED AIRCRAFT
PRESUMABLY ALREADY AIRBORNE FROM DJIBOUTI, TO REQUEST
SYRIAN PERMISSION FOR HIGHJACKED AIRCRAFT TO LAND IN
DAMASCUS SINCE ALL OTHER AIRPORTS APPEARED DETERMINED
TO REFUSE PERMISSION. SYRIAN NEWS BROADCASTS AT 1815L

REPORTED THIS AGREEMENT, ADDING THAT KYPRIANOU HAD ALSO

CONTACTED ARAFAT AND SECURED LATTER'S AGREEMENT THAT ONCE
HIGHJACKERS HAD SURRENDERED TO SYRIAN AUTHORITIES
SYRIA WOULD IN TURN HAND THEM OVER TO PLO. AMONG
THE HOSTAGES ON THE AIRCRAFT WERE DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY
RECTOR MUSTAPHA HADDAD AND SYRIAN-BASED PLO OFFICIALS
ABU MAYZAR AND ABD AL-RAZZAK YAHIA.

3. COMMENT: CAIRO PRESS APPEARS DETERMINED TO PIN
REJECTIONIST LABEL ON ASSAD WHENEVER POSSIBLE, AND HAS
IN THIS CASE ELABORATED A PLOT FOR WHICH THERE APPEARS
TO HAVE BEEN NO BASIS IN REALITY. THE FACT THAT THE
HIGHJACKERS DID NOT TAKE ASSAD UP ON HIS OFFER TO
KYPRIANOU SUGGESTS THEY ANTICIPATED HARSH TREATMENT
AT THE HANDS OF BOTH THE SYRIAN AUTHORITIES AND PLO
SHOULD THEY HAVE LANDED HERE AND FOR THAT REASON CHOSE
TO RETURN TO LANARCA.

4. BEYOND SOME SARCASM IN INITIAL REPORTING OF THE
"FAILURE" OF EGYPTIAN COMMANDO MISSION AND ITS "PIRATICAL"
CHARACTER, SYRIAN MEDIA HAS NOT REPEAT NOT EDITORIALIZED ABOUT
MISSION.

MURPHY

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